



Connecticut Chapter
National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials
P. O. Box 93
Rockfall, CT 06481
Phone: 860-508-4896
Fax: 860-788-2331

www.conn-nahro.org

March 4, 2014 Housing Committee Public Hearing

Re: Raised Senate Bill No. 363, AN ACT TRANSFERRING FUNDS DEPOSITED IN THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING.

Senator Bartolomeo and Representative Butler and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Cathy Branch Stebbins and I am the Executive Director of Conn-NAHRO. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of our Connecticut members who are comprised of Public Housing Authorities and other individuals and organizations involved in affordable and public housing. CONN-NAHRO has concerns regarding some of the language in **Raised Senate Bill No. 363**.

This Committee and the State of Connecticut only recently re-established the Department of Housing and in our opinion, the new Commissioner and her staff are doing a wonderful job of refocusing the state on the important housing issues that face our state. Raised Bill 363 moves Community Investment money to the Department of Housing, which makes sense to us, but it also has language that mandates the Commissioner to fund a specific issue without any input or evaluation by the Commissioner. Removing flexibility from the Commissioner as she begins the operation of the new agency disempowers her in her role and unnecessarily dictates what the Commissioner's priorities should be. The specific language we have concerns about is below:

(3) twenty-five per cent to the [Connecticut Housing Finance Authority] Department of Housing to use as follows: (A) One hundred fifty thousand dollars annually to supplement technical assistance for resident participation and foster the development of independent, resident-led organizations in public housing communities, and (B) the remainder to supplement new or existing affordable housing programs;

It should be noted that resources toward this goal have been recently made available through the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. Two RFPs for technical assistance around this issue were just awarded—one for technical assistance to housing authorities and owners to support tenant

involvement in redevelopment and another RFP issued and soon to be awarded to provide technical assistance to resident-led organizations in public housing.

In our opinion, taking control of valuable resources through what is essentially an earmark toward a special interest topic is a method of policy making that we cannot support. There are limited housing resources; while the language in 363 may serve a current need, it limits funding choices in years to come. Taking control away from a newly formed department of housing is disempowering to the role and function of a new state department and its commissioner.

We urge the committee to remove this language from the bill 363 and give the commissioner the ability to fund housing as needs are identified. If tenant technical assistance is identified as a need, then it should be demonstrated annually and funded annually through the department of housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.